

# FAQ's about Hoarding

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## What is hoarding?

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**Hoarding is a mental health issue that has public safety implications.**

In 2013, Hoarding was deemed a diagnosis recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by the American Psychiatric Association (*DSM-V diagnostic criteria for Hoarding Disorder- 300.3*)

## What causes hoarding?

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**It's not clear what causes hoarding disorder.** Hoarding behavior has many internal and external causes including:

- **Biological** –research links to genetic factors; can start in childhood (although hoarding is more common with older adults).
- **Psychological** – connected to unresolved trauma and loss.
- **Social** – social isolation & loss of social support can worsen hoarding behavior.

## What are the impacts of hoarding?

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**Hoarding results in:**

- Significant emotional distress or physical impairment.
- Emotional distress to those close to the person who is hoarding
- Financial strain.
- Living spaces that cannot be used for their intended purposes.
- Multiple health and safety issues.
- Home may be deemed unfit for habitation and could result in eviction or other action from local authorities.

## How can I help someone who is hoarding?

✓ Do	✗ Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Build trust</b> and maintain trust at all times</li><li>• <b>Listen</b> carefully to the person's fears and concerns; set aside your agenda.</li><li>• <b>Have a conversation</b> if you have concerns, not a judgmental or defensive argument.</li><li>• <b>Create a goal together</b> or work towards a goal that the person hoarding has for themselves.</li><li>• <b>Encourage the person</b> to seek therapy from a professional therapist. Family should take on the role of supporter and encourager, not therapist.</li><li>• <b>Identify existing supports.</b></li><li>• <b>Utilize community resources.</b></li><li>• <b>Cultivate solutions</b> through collaboration.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Force the person to clean or get rid of their possessions.</b> It needs to be a process and at their own will.</li></ul> <p>*Statistics show that a forced clean out can make the situation worse. The person is re-traumatized by the clean out and therefore may hoard worse than they did before the clean out.</p>

Information for this flyer was provided in part by the Hoarding Project and used with permission: <https://www.northwestrelationships.com/thp.html>



## Where can I get local information?

For more information about hoarding or how to support a person who hoards, contact:

- Eau Claire County Department of Human Services: 715-839-7118
  - Elder abuse or self-neglect
  - Mental health case management
- Aging and Disability Resource Center of Eau Claire County: 715-839-4735
  - Community Resources
- Eau Claire City-County Health Department: 715-839-4718
  - Health and safety investigations